

VZCZCXRO1594
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHLB #1994/01 1671424
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161424Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4127
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 001994

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WERNER/SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2016
TAGS: [KISL](#) [LE](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: SUNNI MARCH 14 PARLIAMENTARIAN COMMENTS
ON HARIRI'S LEADERSHIP STYLE

REF: BEIRUT 1037

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Christopher W. Murray. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a June 14 meeting with econoff and FSN political specialist, MP Mosbah Ahdab, a moderate Sunni from Tripoli, provided his insight into the personality and leadership style of MP Sa'ad Hariri. Ahdab described Hariri as likable and a "good guy." Ahdab blamed Hariri's inexperience and a circle of bad advisers for Hariri's periodic slips. He named Hani Hammoud as the worst adviser. Hariri is open to taking appointments with MP's in the March 14 coalition, but uses the meetings to promise good things without giving specifics. According to Ahdab, the March 14 caucus is completely disorganized. There is no "majority whip" to coordinate actions. Ahdab, who is from Tripoli, was particularly critical of what he saw as Hariri's neglect of Tripoli. Hariri seems to have left the Tripoli file completely in the hands of Minister of Public Works Mohammad Safadi -- who is not even loyal to Hariri -- while ignoring his own Sunni allies in Tripoli. End summary.

SA'AD A "GOOD GUY"

¶2. (C/NF) During an official visit to Akkar and Tripoli on June 14 (septel), econoff and FSN political specialist met with MP Mosbah Ahdab, a moderate Sunni and member of the Hariri-led March 14 coalition. Over lunch, Ahdab shared his perspective on March 14 leader MP Saad Hariri and his leadership style. Regarding Hariri's personality, Ahdab repeatedly said that he liked Hariri and described him as a "good guy."

¶3. (C/NF) Ahdab continued, however, that Hariri has been ineffective as a leader. Ahdab expressed doubts that the March 14 majority in parliament could hold together until President Emile Lahoud's term expires in November 2007. The coalition is splintering and Hariri is either doing nothing to stop it or taking the wrong actions. He blamed Hariri's ineffectiveness not only on his inexperience, but also on the bad advice he receives from his inner circle of advisers. In particular, adviser Hani Hammoud is leading Hariri astray, according to Ahdab. Asked if Hariri could develop as a leader if he received better advice, Ahdab replied: "I hope he can learn."

14. (C/NF) Ahdab conceded that Hariri is open to meeting with any MP in the March 14 coalition. Ahdab has no trouble getting an appointment with Hariri. However, the meetings are pointless. Hariri tends to promise good things and is very confident about his ability to achieve what he promises. But Hariri never seems to get into specifics. Hariri, when challenged on his strategy or chances of success, merely looks at the ceiling and says, "Oh, what a country this is." Ahdab commented that Hariri, underneath his overconfident exterior, is actually very anxious and worried.

A DISORGANIZED CAUCUS

15. (C/NF) Although Hariri is open to accepting appointment requests, he does not ask other MPs for meetings or solicit their opinions, according to Ahdab. Other MPs always have to take the initiative if a meeting is to take place. Hariri is not close to any of the MPs in the march 14 majority. He keeps his distance and relies almost entirely on his own advisers. (See reftel for Ahdab's comments on Hariri's links to Saudi Arabia.) In parliament, there is no caucus leadership for the March 14 coalition. With no "majority whip," there is total disorganization among the majority. Ahdab cited the example of parliamentary exchanges with European countries. Hariri does not have a strategy on who to send where. Instead, he asks: "Who wants a free trip to Paris?" The MPs who volunteer have more interest in shopping than in building support in the international community. They usually squander the opportunities afforded by the trip, according to Ahdab.

CAVALIER ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRIPOLI

BEIRUT 00001994 002 OF 002

16. (C/NF) Ahdab sensed that Hariri did not seem to care about Tripoli and his constituents there. Hariri had not delivered any new development assistance to Lebanon's second largest city, despite the city's role in ensuring a March 14 majority in parliament. Ahdab considered that Hariri subverted all northern Sunni and their representatives to Minister of Transport and Public Works Mohammad Safadi. Hariri listens only to Safadi on Tripoli-related issues even though Safadi is not loyal to Hariri. Safadi is more of an independent (and possible aspirant for the position of Prim Minister), who was lured into the Siniora cabinet with a ministerial offer. Ahdab said that Safadi is openly undermining Hariri by getting closer to Aoun. Safadi has done nothing to quell rumors that he could be a prime minister under an Aoun presidency, according to Ahdab. At the same time, Hariri does not solicit or seem to care about the viewpoints of his truest allies in Tripoli, such as Ahdab. Hariri did not even call Ahdab when, in May, Ahdab's security guard shot at his house while his family was inside the residence.

MURRAY